

# BEYOND THE BELTWAY



## Tip Sheet for Elected Officials: How to Use this Toolkit

The purpose of the [Advancing Contraceptive Access Toolkit](#) is to enable you, an elected official, to increase awareness of and enact policies in your state that expand contraceptive access. The overarching goal is to ensure all people have access to the full range of methods so they can choose the one that works best for them and have the power to decide if, when, and under what circumstances to get pregnant. This tip sheet provides actionable ideas and linked resources from the [toolkit](#) to get you started.

### **Overview of Key Policies for Contraceptive Access**

#### [Pharmacist Prescribing](#)

- Allowing pharmacists to [prescribe](#) is not a new concept or limited to birth control. It eliminates some of the barriers that can come with having to visit a provider for a prescription, such as taking time off from work and transportation. These are especially important considerations during COVID-19.
- Research shows that allowing women to get birth control directly from a pharmacist fills important gaps for women who often lack access.

#### [Extended Supply](#)

- Limiting the supply of birth control to only 30 to 90-day's worth reduces timely access to contraception.
- Research from California's family planning program has found that a 12-month supply of birth control decreased unplanned pregnancies by 30%, compared with a supply of just one or three months.

#### [Contraceptive Equity](#)

- Current federal guidelines implementing the ACA require all non-grandfathered plans to cover at least one contraceptive for each of the FDA approved methods for women, as prescribed, without copays or deductibles. Federal guidance also requires that plans reduce administrative barriers for patients.
- As legislators work to address the needs of their residents, some states have passed bills—sometimes referred to as “contraceptive equity” bills—that codify and/or expand upon the federal provision that requires all non-grandfathered plans to cover at least one contraceptive for each of the [18 FDA-approved methods](#), as prescribed, without copays or deductibles (as well as patient education and counseling).

- Some states also require insurers to cover male sterilization, over-the-counter drugs without a prescription, and/or prohibit insurers from requiring prior authorization and step therapy before a patient can access certain methods.

### [Telehealth](#)

- Telehealth has greatly expanded in the US since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and has proven itself a viable option for some folks to obtain contraception.
- To ensure that telehealth is not only beneficial but also equitable, there are important considerations for states, including concerns over quality of care, payment parity, HIPAA compliance, individual privacy, and internet access.
- More information about your state's telehealth policies relevant to contraceptive access can be found [here](#) and an overview of the policies themselves can be found [here](#).

## ***Engage Your Constituents***

### **Host or Participate in Virtual Meeting with Contraceptive Access Stakeholders**

Engaging reproductive health networks in your state through a virtual meeting is a great way to explore and advance the policies in this [toolkit](#). It will also ensure that you know where these stakeholders stand on key issues and how they want to advocate for contraceptive access policies in your state. For example, we suggest discussing the benefits of pharmacist prescribing with your state medical societies and pharmacy board or speaking with insurance companies about the potential gains of an extended supply of contraception. Expanding Medicaid or instituting a family planning waiver (if your state hasn't already done so) should be key areas of discussion as well. Your state's contraceptive landscape [fact sheet](#) (if available, we're currently working to create one for every state) and our [interactive maps](#) on pharmacist prescribing, extended supply, and protecting contraceptive coverage (which include fact sheets on these policies), as well as [telehealth](#) will be helpful in identifying what policies your state has to increase contraceptive access and those you can work toward enacting. Be sure to circulate these items beforehand so that your stakeholders are familiar with them.

### **Integrate into Virtual Town Hall with Constituents**

A virtual town hall is a great way to engage your constituents about the issues that matter most to you and your community. When done well, they can promote a strong sense of trust and confidence between you and your constituents. When done poorly, attendees may "check out" and busy themselves with other tasks. The Congressional Management Foundation has [tips](#) and ideas for a successful virtual town hall. We suggest consulting with your IT staff about what platforms you can use to host your virtual town hall and other tips and resources for a successful event.

### **Issue a Statement to Your Constituents**

Issuing a statement that makes your support for improving contraceptive access clear is another good way to start or continue the conversation around reproductive well-being. Consider including language from our toolkit [blog](#) and your state's contraceptive access [fact sheet](#). Use our state-level [data](#) to highlight state-specific statistics, what policies your state has in place to improve contraceptive access, and federal grants your state has to provide evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention. Our [interactive maps](#) on pharmacist prescribing, extended supply, and protecting contraceptive coverage will be helpful in crafting the contraceptive landscape in your state as well.

### ***Engage Local Media***

#### **Press Releases**

Issuing a press release about the challenges and opportunities surrounding contraceptive access in your state may also be useful. Feel free to incorporate the data from our [press releases](#) on your state's contraceptive landscape (as it becomes available). This will give you greater insight into how many women live in contraceptive deserts in your state, how they may be impacted by restrictive federal policies such as the domestic gag rule, and what policies would help expand access.

#### **Sample Op-Eds**

Help build public support for your policy agenda through media. Use our state-specific [sample op-eds](#) and try to get one published in a local media outlet. You can also use the samples to write a blog post for your office's website. For an example of a published op-ed, you can read Alabama state Representative Merika Coleman's piece in [Rewire](#).

#### **Social Media**

Given the increasing use of social media, it is a good way to share your press releases, op-eds, blogs, and statements with constituents and the media. Common social media platforms include Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Your legislative branch may have policies on social media use that govern what type of content is appropriate, including photos of constituents, and what may be considered a matter of public record. The National Conference of State Legislatures has [examples](#) of these policies, and other helpful resources on the topic.